THE DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTICIPATION CHALLENGE

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DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN AFRICA: A SWEEP OF HISTORY

The attainment of political independence in Africa created possibilities for fundamental change. Having shed colonial yokes, the new independent governments often proceeded to nationalise industry and services, and this offered them the opportunity to give new shape and direction to labour relations. These opportunities were created by the nationalisation of former colonial property and the need to mobilise the population for reconstruction and development. Worker participation was considered, in that context, a strategy for development. It was introduced as an instrument to assist the government / party in power to achieve its (planning) aims, and in a small number of countries participation was introduced as an instrument to transform the political and economic order. The best studied cases are those of Algeria, Tanzania, Egypt, Mozambique and Zambia, whose charismatic leaders had developed a philosophy of liberating participation. Economic motives were not absent in these countries: participation was expected to increase economic efficiency and production, but political motives were also very explicit. These included: to guarantee independent socio-economic development, create a just society with an egalitarian division of wealth and income, education of people and the transformation of the social structure, involvement of workers in decision making and decreasing alienation in the workplace, the development of political democracy, training workers to identify themselves as equal political beings as a fundamental step to the development of democratic socialism (Prasnikar, 1991: 34).

In Algeria, a revolutionary movement introduced *autogestion* [self-management] in 1974 which extended a few years later to 57 enterprises employing over 400.000 workers (Ghezali&Bouzida, 1981:78). Self-management firms came soon under the bureaucratic control of state managers (Clegg, 1971: 73-4). Raptis observed that the state bureaucracy, protected by the Party and the trade unions, was "worming its way" into the functioning of self-management and suppressed democracy (Raptis, 1980: 72-74). A later study concludes that the self-management firms were simply reduced to socialist state enterprises (Boussoumah, 1982). In Egypt, after the military coup against Faisal, the Free Officers announced the Egyptian road to socialism, the *mithaq*, in 1962. Worker participation was part of a larger reform package (nationalisation, free education, job security etc), seeking to integrate capital, labour and the state in order to achieve industrial peace and high productivity (Bayat, 1991: 130 ff). By 1966 more than 400 public enterprises had introduced participation schemes (ILO, 1981:121). The trade unions were incorporated into the state (Bianchi, 1986), and the promises surrounding participation (workers to become masters of their own enterprises) remained rhetorics, as the workplaces remained as authoritarian as before with one difference: the elected worker representatives became a additional stratum in the bureaucracy (El-Sayed, 1978).

Perhaps the best known case of African participation experience is that of Tanzania. Its Arusha Declaration of 1967 drew world-wide attention. It stressed, among other things, that the means of production should be under the control of the peasants and the workers: self-reliant *ujamaa* (Bavu et al, 1981: 277). A Presidential Circular was issued for the creation of Works Councils. In 1971 the single Party, TANU, issued the famous *Mwongozo*, the Party guidelines, which asserted the worker and peasant rights to control (*ibid*: 278). By 1975 142 public sector organisations operated with a

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participative system (Prasnikar, 1991: 81) and 8000 *ujamaa* villages, extended to 85% of the population (ILO, 1981: 67). According to Mihyo, however, the only real workers control in Tanzania was manifested in factory occupations and work-ins, when workers took inspiration in the *Mwongozo* statements and asserted themselves though action protest. But these protests failed, as they were neither supported by Party or trade unions (Mihyo, 1983). The other forms of participation instituted through the Presidential Circular turned out to be new techniques of worker manipulation (Mapolu, 1976: 209). The government forced the unions to propagate the political ideas of the Party and to balance the demands of workers with national policy (Bavu, 1981: 275-276). It took a long 'bottom up' process to finally restore internal trade union democracy some 2 decades later (Chambua, 1997). Zambia's introduction of worker participation was also part of a wider vision that political independence should be followed by economic independence and that to achieve this, Zambians should "become masters of their own destiny", and should "transform capital-controled enterprises in the hands of a few towards ultimately worker self-managed firms" (Fincham&Zulu, 1980). Case studies, however, show that the instituted Workers' Councils were consultative only (ICPE, 1983), and were tranquillizers for industrial conflict, leaving the power of employers untouched (Kester, 1984: 84). Unlike in Tanzania, the sole Party in Zambia (UNIP) did not succeed to integrate the trade union movement in its ranks: ZCTU distanciated itself from participation politics and concentrated fully on traditional trade union activity: collective bargaining (Kester and Nangati, 1987: 67). A later experience occurred in Mozambique, where FRELIMO launched a strategy of revolutionary socialist construction, advocating among other things, democratic worker control. 'Production councils' of workers were to have complete responsibility for their plants. But soon, state-appointed managers established authoritarian one-man management systems. The production councils were reduced to organs with a 'police role against indiscipline, laziness and absenteism' (Sketchly, 1985, quoted in Bayat, 1991: 100). The production councils did to an extent democratise the workplace, but the top down control by the party and the state remained the main characteristic of the management of the enterprises (Hansen, 1997). Several researchers and analysts eventually pointed at the failure of worker participation (Saul, 1985, Sketchley, 1985 and Munslow, 1983).

There were many more countries where worker participation was introduced. Congo followed the principle of the 'three co's': co-determination, co-decision and co-responsibility (Awola,1983:112). Also other revolutionary governments introduced 'transformative' worker participation, as in Benin (ILO, 1981: 120). In other countries, worker participation was introduced from above by 'soldier politicians', to mobilise worker support to their regimes. In Sudan the Nimeri regime introduced worker participation on the Boards of Directors in public enterprises (Musa, 1997) and in Ghana, the Rawlings' regime ordered the formation of Workers Defence Committees immediately after the coup d'etat in the early 1980s (Agbesingale, 2000). Other African countries introduced far more marginal forms of worker participation: in Nigeria, for instance, joint negotiation councils in civil service (Olaifa, 1983: 164-166), consultative committees in Mauritius (Gujadhur et al, 1983) and in Burundi, Gabon, Mauritania, Tunisia and Zaire (ILO, 1981), and presumably in many other countries. In these countries the approach was 'corporative' (Bayat, 1991: 27): peaceful co-operation between the state, capital and labour, "to secure the mutual co-operation of employers and employees in achieving industrial peace, greater efficiency and productivity in the interest of the enterprise, the workers, the consumers and the nation" (ILO, 1981: 10). A special feature encountered in french-speaking countries was that of 'responsible participation', a vague notion referring to mostly non-institutionalised procedures whereby the trade unions in particular were consulted, at enterprise but very explicitely also at national level. Trade union places were reserved in the different national commissions where the social and economic policies of the country were formulated, and trade unions were invited as regular partners on political platforms, and had access to various organs of the ruling political party (Bagayogo, 1983: 12). Responsible participation tested the craftmanship of trade unionists to create margins of influence and defend worker interests in the political game of the government. Trade unions were sometimes able to influence decisions effectively. In Mali they were the main initiator of decisions by the socio-economic council under the Traore regime (Sidibe et al, 1994: chapter 2), in Togo trade unions used responsible

participation to set up successful consumer cooperatives and trade union education centres in all main districts of the country (Barnabo, 1981). In Senegal the trade union federation UNTS became an important partner in in national policy execution: two government ministries were led by trade unionists (Magatte Lo, 1987).

The brief review of African experience in the first decades after political independence until roughly the early 1990s (when labour relations in Africa underwent a radical change) shows that indeed ambitious projects were launched, sometimes aiming at complete de-centralised self-management like in Algeria, transformation to 'Arab' socialism as in Egypt, or 'African' socialism as in Tanzania, Zambia, etc. Generally speaking, these strategies have failed. Objectives formulated for the short run were only realisable in the long run, thus widening the gap between rhetoric and concrete achievement. Workers' participation was often unilaterally set in motion 'from above', by a single political party under charismatic leadership and supported by the government as an important instrument to mobilise workers and to legitimate other structural changes. Above all it was considered instrumental in generating a stable and co-operative response from labour, under control of trade unions which in turn were under tutelage of the single political: descibed as a 'double downward control' (Bernstein, 1976). Except in a few countries, no legal framework was created to regulate competence and procedure of participation. With no legal provisions to rely on, participation was based on trust and therefore highly vulnerable to manipulation by party, government, and management of public enterprises.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION: THE STATE OF THE ART

Structural adjustment and its corollaries, privatisation and liberalisation, put an end to socialist experiments, and the notion of a 'no-nonsense' private enterprise became a key reference. Indeed, most private and privatised African enterprises today correspond to the classical image of unfettered capitalism. The new private owners as well as the managers of the new-style public enterprises want to run the place as they deem fit and are at best prepared to enter into negotiation with trade unions on the terms of the employment contract. Beyond that, all organisational, personnel and production decisions, as well as decisions on the medium and long term future of a workplace, remain unchallenged.

Trade unions find themselves alone in a struggle to influence the terms and the social consequences of structural adjustment. This immense challenge presents itself just at a time when the African trade union movement is going through a process of major change. The democratisation in Africa in the 1990s ended many non-party or one-party governments and thereby also the symbiotic relationship between government and trade unions. Having shaken off party or government control, unions in many countries are now fighting to find their place in the new democratic order. The move towards autonomy and democracy goes hand in hand with trade union pluralism. Trade union rights have to be redrawn and defended and, following the withdrawal of (official or disguised) government subsidies and the automatic 'check-off' system, widespread lay-offs have led to unions losing members, income and even the most essential resources (Adu-Amankwah & Kester, 1999: 21-26).

Under structural adjustment participation became a notion associated with bad management, and was seen as an error for which previous governments are to blame. Where workers participation was not legalised it was defenceless. Where it was legalised or formalised, this referred mostly to the public sector which is shrinking or being reformed into joint ventures. Yet, participation practices continue to exist in a number of countries. Since the late 1980s, research on democratic participation is conducted under the African Workers' Participation Development Programme (APADEP), a programme of cooperation between many African trade unions and universities. Questionnaire surveys of over 6000 trade union representatives were carried out in Guinea, Zimbabwe, Mali, Tanzania, Ghana and Burkina Faso, and are presently under way in several other countries. Case studies and longitudinal trend studies were conducted in the countries mentioned, as well as in Togo, Benin, Mozambique, Sudan, Zambia and South Africa (1). It is obviously impossible to present here the rich results available to date. In this paper which is subject to severe limitations in space, I will highlight some major results of case studies and questionnaire survey.

Workers' Councils in Tanzania, introduced by a 1970 presidential directive, continue to function in the public sector. The success of the councils studied was very limited (Musa,1994; Kiduanga *et al*,1994; Chambua *et al*, 1995). Many factors contributed to the disappointing functioning of the councils. Agendas were mostly prepared by management, documents were made available shortly before or at the council meeting itself and could not be studied by worker representatives, if they were able to read them at all. Moreover, several worker representatives expressed fear of victimisation, even of dismissal. One of the achievements, according to the worker representatives, is that they could at least express themselves on occasion. General assemblies are appreciated in spite of their low effectiveness. In a Dar es Salaam case study, the researchers report "workers appear to taste participation only through the general meetings". This case study also mentions occasional successes: financial assistance on social occasions, such as burial expenses, a dispensary, uniforms, loans for workers, bonuses, performance awards, transport, medical treatment (Kiduanga *et al*, 1994). A Morogoro case study mentions benefits directly related to social welfare, loan advances and a mid-month 50% salary advance (Chambua, 2002). An extensive study of three enterprises in Zimbabwe shows that workers' committees and Works Councils instituted under labour legislation, are mere communication channels between workers and management. Even when worker representatives present their demands quite persistently they have neither power resources nor sanctions at their disposal and cannot present a powerful challenge to managerial prerogative in any way (Schiphorst, 2001: 338). Yet, workers continued to consider the workers' committees as an important forum of presenting and pressing their needs, as the focal point of the workers' voice on the shopfloor (*ibid*: 339). Interestingly, Schiphorst concludes that the trade union' fears that the workers' committees would erode the 'workers' class struggle' appeared to be unfounded and suggests that co-operation between the trade union and shop floor representatives should be beneficial to both (*ibid*: 360).

In the other countries studies, worker participation is less formalised compared to Tanzania and Zimbabwe, but various forms of participation exist. Most common are works committees which may include safety and health committees, suggestion and productivity committees, funeral committees and so on. These committees mostly consist of worker representatives but may also include management. In several countries (Ghana, Mali and Guinea) there are more or less regular 'general assemblies' of all workers and management. The Ghana researchers consider the participation structures 'inadequate in number and deficient in their functioning', due to perceptions of workers, attitudes of management and lack of time, material and resources (Agbesinyale, 2000:125). Yet in one case study many workers stated that the Disciplinary Committee, a form of workers participation, 'had saved them a lot of trouble': unlike in the past, the workers could only be dismissed after many procedures had been exhausted. They saw this as one of the fruits of workers' participation in management. Other benefits mentioned included salary increase and payment of salaries on time, improvement of drinking water and improvement of worker-manager work relations (Musa, 1999). But all decisions made in the different participatory fora were only advisory to the board of directors, in which the workers were not represented (*ibid*). Also in the Mali studies (Mallé *et al*, 1992; Coulibaly *et al*, 1993a, 1993b and 1994), the workers were not represented in the Board of Directors in private enterprises (most are privatised from public enterprises which had worker board representation). Yet, workers in Mali were very eager to participate in decisions affecting the productivity of the company. They felt that they were consulted little or not at all about these decisions. They complained that management bought spare parts that were not adapted to the machines. They claimed that they should have been consulted because they would have had better ideas on how to improve productivity of the company and that they would have felt better respected in that way (Coulibaly *et al*, 1994). In other countries where case studies were conducted (Guinea and Burkina Faso) the absence of any form of consultation or participation is reported, like in a commercial bank in Conakry (Baldé et al, 2001a) or workers and trade unionist in a steel plant are reported to be humiliated by management, so much so that the researchers conclude the workplace is best characterised as 'modern slavery" (Baldé et al 2000b). Also the Burkina Faso case studies contain no positive message. The studies conclude that even the most basic problems have to be resolved such as respect for trade union freedom and rights. Management is blamed, but also the trade

union movement itself which is split up in many competing unions unwilling or uncapable to produce a minimum of unity in action (Diasso et al, 1998 and 2000, Kaboré et al, 2000).

Summing up the data of these many case studies it would appear that in several countries, workers and worker representatives gain access to information on a wide range of issues which may help them to make better informed demands. It offers opportunities for consultation and can lead to obtain certain material benefits. More striking is the number of obstacles to effective participation: poor communication of information (also between representatives and workers), the mere advisory status of the participatory structures, the lack of legal backing, the danger of management manipulation, victimization, and above all, the lack of adequate education and training of the worker representatives (and of management also!). The explanation for the failure of experience in participation does not lie in any inherent weakness of the idea, but rather in the fact that the conditions for the development of participation were simply not there. In conclusion, participation did not fail: what failed was the way it was implemented (Kester & Sidibé, 1997:9). In some other countries, as in Guinea and Burkina Faso, even the most rudimentary form of trade union, let alone worker representation, is still a bitter struggle.

Much attention is paid in the APADEP studies to opinions of and attitudes towards participation. Five dimensions of worker's representatives' views of participation are studied: acceptance of participation in general, evaluation of participation, militancy with regard to participation and participation propensity. There is almost across-the-board (between 93% and 99%) general acceptance of participation in the five countries on which consolidated information is now available (Adu-Amankwah et al, *op cit*: 31). However, representatives are also on their guards: in Guinea, for example, all say they accept participation but seven out of eight say they will *only* go for participation *if* it guarantees protection of their interests (Diallo a.o., 1992: 96); this view is almost as widely held in Mali, Zimbabwe and Ghana, and in all three countries may be explained as a reaction to erstwhile highly manipulative government-initiated participation schemes.

In a structured questionnaire question, the respondents were asked to choose three from a total of eight opinions distributed evenly between four values of participation: human relations ('getting more respect as a worker', 'better relations between workers and management'), democracy ('having more say on important questions', 'more power for the working class'), economic equity ('getting a just wage', 'a fair distribution of jobs') and use of human resources ('working better and more' and 'assisting in the building up of the country'). In Ghana, in a spontaneous reaction to the phenomenon 'participation' worker representatives foremost associate it with worker involvement in decision making: also when comparing four major values that may be attached to participation, 'more democracy' ranks highest among priority values (82%, against 69% for 'better use of human resources', 25% for 'better human relations', 7% for 'more equity' and 8% for other values (Ghartey, 2000: 92). A similar result was obtained in Guinea (Diallo, *et al*, 1992: 90), and in Mali (Coulibaly *et al*, 2000: 74). In Tanzania, human relations scored highest: this may reflect the emphasis this country has placed on 'socialism with a human face' for so many decades. Human relations score also highest in Zimbabwe where, as the questionnaire data suggest, social relations with supervisors, managers and directors are particularly bad.

By far the majority of respondents in all five countries adopt a militant attitude to participation: between 80 - 95% state that workers have *the right* to be informed, consulted, to co-decide. The respondents appear to be most of all pre-occupied with access to decision making. In the earlier mentioned case studies if was often noted that workers and worker representatives felt frustrated for not being involved in decision making on so many matters on which they felt they could make contributions, in the interest of the enterprise as well as in their own interest (if only to keep their employment). They are aware of the advice they may have to offer, and feel bitter about the lack of consultation (Adu-Amankwah et al: *op cit*). The questionnaire survey probed further into this participative decision making question by assessing repondents' 'propensity' to participate: on what sort of decisions would they accept managements' prerogative to decide, on what sort of decisions would they claim the workers' prerogative to participation. The respondents considered 18 different types of

company-level decisions - ranging from overall economic policy issues and production questions, to organisation and staffing issues, the terms of employment and working conditions in the employment contract, and welfare questions. The majority of representatives want participation to cover a whole range of issues, and should not be confined to welfare, contracts of employment and staffing matters. Their propensity to participation also focuses on organisation and production, and even more critically on key economic decisions: in Tanzania where militancy for participation is highest, more than 90% of the respondents claim participation prerogatives on investment decisions and profit allocation, and in the other countries this percentage is not much lower (Adu-Amankwah et al, op cit: 333-34).

INVESTING IN DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

The future of democratic participation in Africa would appear bleak. The process of political democratisation in the 1990s gave hope to many people to show that they can themselves act to survive, to make themselves heard and to take part in decision making. But democracy remained limited to the polls, it was not applied to the world of work or to the economy. Encouraged and more or less forced by structural adjustment, most African countries have opted for a shrinking of the public sector, reformism has replaced the transformist/revolutionary perspective and the trend of establishing political pluralism is growing fast. At the place of work major changes take place because of the more open world market, globalisation, technological development etc. Management is building up human resources techniques, if possible linked to forms of company corporatism, in an attempt to come to terms with the workers directly (or less politely expressed: to get rid of trade unions). Working conditions in the workplaces are devastatingly bad and the majority of trade union militants are bitterly dissatisfied with practically all aspects of working life and that of the workers they represent. Not only are they generally highly dissatisfied with their earnings, but also with welfare conditions (washrooms, toilets, cantines etc), with working conditions (hygiene, safety and health, etc) with transport facilities, but also with personnel policy and enterprise management (Adu Amankwah *et al*,1999: 7-14). Many African analysts hold that participation should be a key player in the struggle for democracy (Anyang'Nyong'o, 1987; Imam,1991; Ake,1995: Onimode, 1992; Rasheed,1995; Newbury,1994).

An important initiative in the area of participation was taken in post-apartheid South Africa. In a new and democratically debated Labour Relations Act provisions were made for a powerful national level concertation machinery (NEDLAC - the National Economic Development and Labour Council) and for so-called 'workplace forums' which may be instituted at the request of trade unions and will be assured of practical support mostly to be paid from the enterprise budget (Du Toit *et al*, 1996; Anstey, 1997). In the discourse of many other African countries 'partnership' and 'social dialogue' have become the new strategic concepts. The trend of privatisation and pluralist political democracy is not expected to take participation off the agenda of labour relations. The underlying participation values of humanisation, democracy, equity and human resources development have been widely recognised. Effective and meaningfull participation remains a struggle of the workers and their trade unions in the first place. This struggle will be of paramount importance: an investment in in the development of workers' participation should in the long run also be an investment in the development of genuine democratic processes.

Democratic participation is an ongoing process of policy and strategy formulation, of designing and re-designing structures and procedures, based on evaluation of experience. This requires organisation and support. Democratic participation as one of the pillars of democracy, requires investment. Apart from creating the appropriate institutions, also the conditions have to be created so that these institutions can function effectively and can adjust to new situations. A major difficulty encountered in the functioning of participation is the (formal) structure of participation. In the practice of many countries, much of what is worker or trade union participation is informal or occurring in a framework in which no rights and duties are established for the parties taking part. This is as much true for the rather common *general assemblies* as often for the workers committees and works councils in most of the countries

studied. Also, with consultations at local, regional and national level, when trade union representatives are invited by the administration, the proposals, suggestions or claims from the representatives, have no "status". And when formal regulations or statutes do exist, they normally only give consultative capacity to worker representatives. In the end it is management who decides. Workers participation in Africa can be much strengthened by formulating the rules of the game, by establishing rights and duties of those who interact. Many have been the warnings against 'tea, towel and toilet participation' - worker participation on trivial matters, at the cost of participation on matters which have more important consequences for the workers. What are priority areas of participation? From the interpretation of APADEP research it can be seen that even 'tea, towels and toilet' are not trivial matters in many African work places, nor indeed is the availability of safe drinking water! Basic working and welfare conditions should be important concerns of effective worker participation. But should participation stop here? As has been demonstrated by the opinions of the majority of the interviewed worker representatives, questions of personnel policy, organisation, production as well as of general business policy are matters on which effective participation is also wanted. This implies that the ambitions with respect to the scope of democratic participation go beyond the desire to establish a more human workplace. They include the desire for creating *institutions of democratic control* over the policy of the company, under the principle that workplace policy is not an exclusive prerogative of owners and management but one shared by the workers, who are also stakeholders in the production process. Degree and scope of participation can be progressively developed over time, to become gradually more effective and meaningful. Co-decision rights on questions of crucial importance for workers can ensure that participation becomes a real expression of democracy as it places the 'governance' of the company under democratic control.

Apart from degree and scope of participation a number of other conditions that allow for the good functioning of participation should be taken care of in the design. APADEP case studies have demonstrated many weaknesses that need to be overcome. A possible checklist of important matters is as follows: meetings of participation organs should take place in working time; elected representatives should have time off for preparation and follow-up; they should be protected against victimisation; information regarding decisions to be taken should be submitted to the representatives in time; there should be procedures to handle possible disputes; there should be administrative, secretarial and organisational support (such as a meeting place, or possibly a permanent office, access to telecommunication, services of a secretary, facilities to file all documentation etc); there should be financial support, etc. These conditions are necessary to make participation functional: even the best design may be of little use if minimal conditions are not created.

A recurrent major reason for the relative lack of success of democratic participation was the absence of education and training, which are necessary to understand participation and be capable of playing an effective role in it. The respondents to the APADEP questionnaires say in majority that they expect training and education to be offered first and foremost by the trade unions. In as much as democratic participation should be seen as a learning process, it is important to continuously evaluate experience with the aim of drawing lessons for the future, and of assuring that these lessons are worked up into education and training. It is difficult to imagine how progress can otherwise be made in making participation more meaningful and effective. This brings the universities into the picture. The traditional role of universities is to conduct research and give education, and provide service to society. The neo-liberal climate is however affecting universities all over the world which are fast becoming simple training grounds for professionals. Under ever greater pressure of austerity, universities are forced to reduce their staff and concentrate on teaching. Research can only be undertaken with funding by (prosperous!) third parties. But universities have the responsibility to contribute to the development of democracy in all its facets, as public institutions they should be bulwarks of democracy. Universities should also not merely take up these issues for academic knowledge's sake only, but seek also to transmit specialised knowledge to those social actors who can use it profitably. Trade union - university cooperation in Africa can lead to the creation of labour studies programmes in the universities and other higher level training programmes for trade union leaders and policy makers, as well as for other worker

representatives. Interesting developments are taking place under the APADEP programme. For instance, a Diploma Course on Labour Studies was launched at the University of Cape Coast in 1999, the result of many years of cooperation between the University and the Ghana Trades Union Congress, and making use of jointly undertaken research. Similar co-operation schemes are being developed in Guinea, Burkina Faso, Tanzania and South Africa.

Participatory democracy does not happen on its own. Investments (education, training, an adequate infrastructure, expert advice, research and monitoring, etc) are not only necessary but also costly. One cannot expect African trade unions to foot that bill. In most countries, membership contributions are not enough to ensure that unions function properly. They can hardly pay for the cost of their premises, telephone bills, electricity, transport etc. Transition to democracy has rendered trade unions more autonomous and independent from state and party control. This also implies a loss of income: check-off arrangements are no longer automatic in many places, and a lot of direct or indirect state subsidy has been discontinued in many countries. Moreover, mass dismissals in the formal sector have resulted in the dramatic reduction in membership and thus in trade union income. International trade union cooperation has been invaluable in making the African trade union movement cope with the volatile transition it is going through. This support has assisted African trade unions in their reorganisation, in managing their internal democratisation, in obtaining minimal levels of infrastructure and above all, in setting up or reinforcing trade union education systems, a task to which the ILO has also very considerably contributed. The philosophy underlying this cooperation is to achieve sustainability and self-sufficiency, but cooperation which was launched as a temporary impetus may become a permanent feature, and run the risk of becoming addictive. This pitfall should be avoided. Trade unions cannot carry on dancing to the donor's tune for ever.

The effective and meaningful participation of workers and trade unions in the development of the continent, of their countries and their places of work, requires investments which go far beyond funds available to trade unions. Should not the enterprise pay for democracy? In Europe, where democratic worker participation has a long history and has come to stay, there has been extensive public support for democratic participation, by legislating participation structures, including financial support for its development. In a number of European countries funds for education, advice, logistic and administrative support, time, study etc, have to be provided by law from the company budget. These facilities were created, not in the least, through trade union struggle and tough trade union-management and trade union-government negotiations. It will be necessary to fight for national legislation compelling employers to fund activities linked to participation, possibly by fixing a sum of money proportional to payroll costs. It is not realistic to expect a quantum leap in changing legislation in this direction. But the debate with the employers can be opened, collective bargaining may be used to agree on the financing of more and more supportive facilities. Such negotiations can be an important stepping stone towards legal obligations.

CONCLUSION

Trade unions are agents of change and democracy. They have played important roles in obtaining independence (lately, in South Africa, this role was yet another time reconfirmed), and have again contributed to the restoration of democracy in the early nineties. Sidibé & Venturi quote at least 20 countries where trade unions have played important roles in the democratisation process (1997: 28-37). But their task is far from completed: it has only just begun. Any trade union conscious of its mission in an African context cannot discard an ideal for which it has mobilised millions of men and women (Kester, Sidibé & Gogué, 1997: 96 ff). Trade union support is needed because trade unions can act as brokers and as a bridge in the democratisation process. A force that can be trusted by the workers can bind together different levels, different moments in time and different issues at the hearth of the participatory process. The defence of human rights and fundamental liberties, and the sound management of public and private resources within a transparent democratic framework, are permanent

battlegrounds of the trade union movement. The great challenge of the 21st century will be: how to achieve, consolidate, widen and deepen democracy. This is a political as much as an economic and industrial relations challenge. The great lesson of the 20th century is that fascism, state socialism, dictatorship or any other form of unilaterally imposed government have led to disaster, to war, to suppression and poverty. Another great lesson is that also political democracy systems may be the arena of manipulation and exploitation, in particular in greedy capitalist controlled systems. Instituting democracy is the beginning and not the end of the road to economic progress and social justice: the road to democracy is littered with pitfalls. Democracy is a living phenomenon only if it makes steps forewards, giving citizens more effective influence on their present and future conditions.

Endnote

(1) Apart from a wide range of monographs and manuals, a number of book-form reports were published and include: *Guinée: pour un nouveau sydicalisme en Afrique [Guinea: a plea for a new kind of trade unionism in Africa],*(1992), *Trade Unions and Sustainable Democracy in Africa,* (1997), *How to Make Democratic Participation a Success? an African Trade Union Challenge,* (1999), *Salariat et Participation [Employees and Participation]*, (2000), *Democratic Workers' Participation for Economic and Social Development: the case of Ghana*, (2000) and *Democratic Participation in Tanzania; the voices of workers' representatives* (forthcoming 2002). Complete bibliography details may be found under 'references' below. Many researchers and trade unionists contributed to the books mentioned: Florent Valère Adegbidi, Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, Patrick Agbesinyale, Jean Sourou Agossou, Gumah Ahmed Awudu, Anthony Yaw Baah, Niki Best, Akua Britwum, Samuel Chambua, Massa Coulibaly, David Kwabla Dorkenoo, Nana Ghartey, Raoul Galarraga, David Ginsburg, Aimé Tchabouré Gogué, Ken Hansen, Evance Kalula, Nadedjo Bigou Laré, Fatima Maiga, Tacko Oumou Maiga, El-Khider Ali Musa, Godwin Naimani, Tiecoro Sangare, Guillaume Silga, Sékéné Moussa Sissoko, Sira Traore, Kwadwo Tutu, Brigitte Venturi, Reina de Vree and Eddie Webster.

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THE DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTICIPATION CHALLENGE

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Born 1937, Netherlands nationality, PhD sciences Erasmus University. associated to Institute of Social Studies (The Hague) until 1997, and occasionally as researcher or visiting professor to the Sri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations (New Delhi), the University of Malta, the International Centre for Public Enterprises (Ljubljana). Founder of the Labour Studies Programme at the Institute of Social Studies, co-founder of the Workers' Participation Development Centre at the University of Malta, co-founder and Director (1981-1997) of the African Workers' Participation Development Programme (APADEP), Retired in 1998. Presently Technical Advisor to the Dutch trade union federation FNV.

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